

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of treating a spine of a patient, comprising:
 - implanting a fusion device via an anterior approach in an interbody space between at least two of a first vertebra, a second vertebra and a third vertebra;
 - inserting an access device into said patient with said access device in a first configuration having a first cross-sectional area at a distal portion thereof;
 - actuating said access device to a second configuration having an enlarged cross-sectional area at said distal portion thereof such that the distal portion extends across at least a portion of each of the three adjacent vertebrae; and
 - performing a multi-level procedure through the access device across the at least three adjacent vertebrae.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the multi-level procedure is a two-level procedure.
3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the access device is inserted via a postero-lateral approach.
4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the access device is inserted via a transforaminal approach.
5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the access device is inserted via a posterior approach.
6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the multi-level procedure is fixation.
7. The method of Claim 6, further comprising performing a fixation procedure via an anterior approach.
8. The method of Claim 6, further comprising performing a fusion procedure external to the interbody space through the access device after performing fixation.

9. The method of Claim 6, further comprising performing decompression through the access device prior to performing fixation.

10. The method of Claim 9, further comprising performing a fusion procedure external to the interbody space through the access device after performing fixation.

11. The method of Claim 1, wherein the multi-level procedure comprises delivering a bone growth substance through the access device.

12. The method of Claim 11, further comprising performing decompression through the access device before delivering the bone growth substance through the access device.

13. The method of Claim 11, further comprising performing decompression through the access device after delivering the bone growth substance through the access device.

14. A method of treating a spine of a patient, comprising:

anteriorly exposing an interbody space between at least two of a first vertebra, a second vertebra, and a third vertebra;

placing a fusion device in the interbody space;

inserting an access device through an incision in the skin of the patient generally posteriorly until a distal portion thereof is located adjacent the spine, said access device being inserted in a first configuration having a first cross-sectional area at the distal portion thereof;

actuating said access device to a second configuration having an enlarged cross-sectional area at said distal portion thereof;

providing a first fastener configured for insertion into said patient through said access device and for attachment to the first vertebra;

providing a second fastener configured for insertion into the patient through said access device and for attachment to a second vertebra;

providing a third fastener configured for insertion into said internal passage of said expandable conduit and for attachment to a third vertebra;

attaching said first, second, and third fasteners to said first, second, and third vertebrae;

inserting an elongated member through said access device and moving said elongated member adjacent to said first, second, and third fasteners; and

securing said elongate member to said first, second, and third fasteners.

15. A method of treating the spine of a patient, comprising:

anteriorly exposing an interbody space between at least two of a first vertebra, a second vertebra, and a third vertebra;

placing a fusion device in the interbody space;

inserting an access device through an incision in the skin of the patient generally posteriorly until a distal portion of the access device is located adjacent the spine of the patient, said access device being inserted in a first configuration having a first cross-sectional area at the distal portion thereof;

actuating said access device to a second configuration having an enlarged cross-sectional area at said distal portion thereof;

advancing a decompression tool through the access device;

removing a portion of bone from at least one of the first, second, and third vertebrae through the access device;

providing a first fastener configured for insertion into said patient through said access device and for attachment to the first vertebra;

providing a second fastener configured for insertion into the patient through said access device and for attachment to a second vertebra;

providing a third fastener configured for insertion into said internal passage of said expandable conduit and for attachment to a third vertebra;

attaching said first, second, and third fasteners to said first, second, and third vertebrae;

inserting an elongated member through said access device and moving said elongated member adjacent to said first, second, and third fasteners; and

securing said elongate member to said first, second, and third fasteners.

16. The method of Claims 15, further comprising placing a bone growth substance through the access device and adjacent at least one of said first, second, and third fasteners and said elongate member to enhance bone growth.

17. A method of treating a spine of a patient, comprising:

anteriorly exposing an interbody space between at least two of a first vertebra, a second vertebra, and a third vertebra;

placing a fusion device in the interbody space;

inserting an access device through an incision in the skin of the patient generally posteriorly until a distal portion of the access device is located adjacent the spine of the patient, said access device being inserted in a first configuration having a first cross-sectional area at the distal portion thereof;

actuating said access device to a second configuration having an enlarged cross-sectional area at said distal portion thereof;

providing a first fastener configured for insertion into said patient through said access device and for attachment to the first vertebra;

providing a second fastener configured for insertion into the patient through said access device and for attachment to a second vertebra;

providing a third fastener configured for insertion into said internal passage of said expandable conduit and for attachment to a third vertebra;

attaching said first, second, and third fasteners to said first, second, and third vertebrae;

inserting an elongated member through said access device and moving said elongated member adjacent to said first, second, and third fasteners; and

securing said elongate member to said first, second, and third fasteners; and

placing a bone growth substance through the access device and adjacent at least one of said first, second, and third fasteners and said elongate member to enhance bone growth.

18. A method of treating a spine of a patient, comprising:

anteriorly exposing an interbody space between at least two of a first vertebra, a second vertebra, and a third vertebra;

placing a fusion device in the interbody space;

inserting an access device through an incision in the skin of the patient generally posteriorly until a distal portion of the access device is located adjacent the spine of the patient, said access device being inserted in a first configuration having a first cross-sectional area at the distal portion thereof;

actuating said access device to a second configuration having an enlarged cross-sectional area at said distal portion thereof; and

placing a bone growth substance through the access device and adjacent an interbody space defined between at least two of said first, second, and third vertebrae to enhance bone growth therebetween.

19. The method of Claim 18, further comprising:

advancing a decompression tool through the access device; and

removing a portion of bone from one of the first vertebrae, the second vertebrae, and the third vertebrae through the access device.

20. A method of treating the spine of a patient, comprising:

inserting an access device through an incision in the skin of the patient generally posteriorly until a distal portion of the access device is located adjacent the

spine of the patient, said access device being inserted in a first configuration having a first cross-sectional area at the distal portion thereof;

actuating said access device to a second configuration having an enlarged cross-sectional area at said distal portion thereof that spans at least a portion of a first vertebra, a second vertebra, and a third vertebra;

placing a fusion device through the access device and in at least one of a first interbody space between the first and second vertebrae and a second interbody space between the second and third vertebrae;

performing a two level fixation procedure spanning the first and second interbody spaces through the access device;

advancing a decompression tool through the access device; and

removing a portion of bone from one of the first vertebrae, the second vertebrae, and the third vertebrae through the access device.

21. The method of Claim 20, wherein the portion of bone removed comprises a portion of a facet.

22. The method of Claim 20, wherein the portion of bone removed comprises a portion of a lamina.

23. The method of Claim 20, further comprising placing a bone growth substance through the access device and adjacent at least one of the first interbody space and the second interbody space to enhance bone growth therebetween.

24. A method of treating a spine of a patient, comprising:

inserting an access device through an incision in the skin of the patient generally posteriorly until a distal portion of the access device is located adjacent the spine of the patient, said access device being inserted in a first configuration having a first cross-sectional area at the distal portion thereof;

actuating said access device to a second configuration having an enlarged cross-sectional area at said distal portion thereof that spans at least a portion of a first vertebra, a second vertebra, and a third vertebra;

placing a fusion device through the access device and in at least one of a first interbody space between the first and second vertebrae and a second interbody space between the second and third vertebrae; and

placing a bone growth substance through the access device and adjacent at least one of the first interbody space and the second interbody space to enhance bone growth therebetween.

25. The method of Claim 24, further comprising:

advancing a decompression tool through the access device; and

removing a portion of bone from one of the first vertebrae, the second vertebrae, and the third vertebrae through the access device.

26. The method of Claim 24, wherein the portion of bone removed comprises a portion of a facet.

27. The method of Claim 24, wherein the portion of bone removed comprises a portion of a lamina.